

# Sanctification : 4. God's Ways With His Children

by Zac Poonen

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*God's ways are different from ours, and He allows failure and weakness in our lives to teach us humility and to help us experience His strength and guidance.*

**Duration:** 59:21

**Scripture:** Genesis 9:20-21, Isaiah 55:8, Matthew 6:33, Luke 22:31, Acts 2:41

**Topics:** "Sanctification"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses four ways in which God's ways differ from our expectations. The first area is failure, where the speaker explains that failure is essential for our spiritual growth and humility. They use the example of Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, where 3,000 people were saved in just 15 minutes. The speaker also mentions the incident where Peter is released from prison while James had already been killed, highlighting the mystery of God's ways. They caution against preachers who don't understand God's ways and distort scripture. The speaker emphasizes the importance of balance and truth in various aspects of the Christian life, such as love for God and man, the fruit and gifts of the Spirit, and the kindness and severity of God.

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## Transcript

I want to begin with a verse found in Isaiah 55. We're probably familiar with that statement that God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. And here it says in Isaiah 55 verse 8, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord.

Now it's very difficult for us to really believe that verse. Because after we've been Christians for some years, we think we have understood all of God's ways, but we haven't. The more I hear a lot of Christian preachers today, I see that they haven't understood God's ways.

And that's why they preach as they do. A lot of things which appear to be scriptural, but which are not because they take certain portions of scripture and expand it out of all proportion to the rest of truth. So that it's no longer the truth.

I mean, it's like I've often pictured truth like the human body. And the beauty of the human body is, first of all, there's a balance. You know, the left side externally is so perfectly balanced with the right side.

And it would be hideous if one eye were ten times the size of the other, even if you had two eyes. Balance is one thing. And truth is like that.

Truth has to be balanced. In so many areas like love to God and love to man and the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit and grace and truth. Behold the kindness and the severity of God.

We could go on and on and on and on. In many, many areas, evangelism and discipleship. It's where there is imbalance, there is ugliness.

And even though we may be speaking what appears to be truth, it's not the truth because it's only one side. So in the other thing about the human body, beauty is that each part has got a different size. So if one truth is like if you make a year so big, it's a year, but it's ugly.

And that's what's happening in a lot of Christian preaching today because they haven't understood God's ways. And that brings a lot of discouragement and unreality in the lives of many Christians. And how different are God's ways from our ways? It says here in verse 9, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts than your thoughts.

In other words, God's way of working, God's way of doing things, God's way of thinking is as different from our human way of thinking as heaven is from earth. So the difference is vast. It's almost indescribable.

The difference between God's way and our way. If I can, first of all, acknowledge that, then I will come to the scriptures with a humbler attitude and say like the psalmist, teach me your ways, oh Lord. Otherwise, it's very easy, perhaps after we've been Christians for a little while, to have a little arrogance in us to think that I know God's way.

We don't really. So I want to say, share a few things today. I want to speak first of all about, I want to speak about four things where God's ways are different from what we would expect them to be.

And the first of all, first of all in the area of failure. Now we would think that in a genuinely sincere Christian or a wholehearted Christian, failure should have no place. Now that's our way of thinking.

Because that is the view that the world has given us. That it's not God's way. Failure in our life, failing sometimes repeatedly in some area, is very essential to our spiritual education.

Jesus didn't need it because he never came with that sinful nature that we have. But we need it. And there's never been a Christian in the history of Christian church that has not needed it.

And the scriptures teach us. That's why the Bible is full of examples of the failures of godly people. I remember as a young Christian, I read the biographies of some of these great saints.

I mean, there was Hudson Taylor's biography written by his daughter-in-law. Now a daughter-in-law can never write about the failures of her father-in-law. That's impossible.

And so here was this perfect saint who almost never did anything wrong. And that didn't encourage me because I felt he was a million miles ahead of me. And where in the world could I ever be like him? And then I read another book on Hudson Taylor by John Pollock called Hudson Taylor and Maria.

And there I saw a very human person who fell in love and all types of things which are very human. And I realized that this man was very human after all. And that's the difference between a lot of biographies we

read about missionaries who accomplished fantastic things and we almost never read anything about their slip-ups or their failures.

The difference between those type of biographies and the biographies in Scripture. Scripture tells us very clearly right from the first man whose history is described extensively in Scripture. That's Noah.

How he failed. I mean, we would have liked to leave out those few verses about his getting drunk and lying naked and things like that. But the Bible puts it in.

After this tremendous faithfulness for 120 years and seeing God leading him out of this ark to be the father of the human race in a sense because all the rest were wiped out. That he finally gets drunk and the Bible puts it down there as what he did. Abraham's failures of telling lies and things like that.

And then we come to the New Testament. I find that in Luke chapter 22, the Lord told Simon in verse 31. Luke 22, 31.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. It's one of those lovely passages that teach us like in the first chapter of Job. That Satan has to get permission from God before he does anything to God's children.

He has asked for permission to sift Peter and God gave him permission. God gave permission to Satan to sift Job. It's only the chaff that goes away when we sift the wheat.

That's why Jesus used that word, to sift like wheat. But I have prayed for you and we would think that Jesus should say, I prayed for you that you won't deny me. But that's not what he prayed.

He did not pray that Peter should not fail or fall in the temptation. Because we know he fell and he didn't just fall once. He fell three times that night.

And it's very interesting that Jesus did not pray that Peter should not fall. We pray for one another, Lord preserve them in the moment of temptation that they don't fall. And it's a good prayer to pray.

But it's very interesting to see that Jesus did not pray that for Peter. He knew that Peter would fail. In fact, he said that before this night is out, you're going to deny me three times.

But what he did pray, he said that in verse 34. I say to you, before the cock crows today, you'll have denied me three times. He knew he was going to fail.

Imagine telling a person you're going to fail tonight three times. But he says, I prayed for you that when you do fail, your faith may not fail. And that's the Lord's goal that I don't get discouraged when I have fallen.

And I don't give up and say, well, I'm useless. I'm hopeless. God can do nothing with me.

Then faith has failed. Then everything is gone. So that teaches me that even Peter committing such a terrible sin, like saying, I don't know Jesus.

Who are you talking about? I don't think any of us sitting here would ever get that far to say. I think a lot of us, perhaps all of us would be willing to give our lives to acknowledge that we are Christians. I mean, none of us would say I'm a Hindu or an atheist to save our life.

But that's what Peter was doing. He was pretending not to know Jesus just to save his life. And even such a terrible sin like that, and he did it three times.

He said, Peter, just make sure when you've done that, that you don't give up hope. And say, well, God's given up on me because I did this terrible thing and I didn't just do it once. I did it again and again.

He said, I prayed for you that your faith may not fail, that when you reach that rock bottom, you don't give up hope. These are God's ways. Now, I'll just explain to you why failure is necessary in our life.

And when you have turned again, he says, I know you're going to turn. He encouraged him saying, I know that you are going to turn. And when you turn again, strengthen your brothers.

So, for Peter to have a ministry of strengthening other people, he had to go through failure. Such deep failure, more than any of the other apostles had failed. And not just failure, but after failing, he had to make sure his faith did not fail.

If you failed in life and your faith failed, saying, oh, well, God's given up on me, then you can't strengthen your brothers. Your failure, God can handle. But the failure of faith to say, well, faith is basically to say God loves me.

I've understood faith to be that God still loves me. If you can say that in any situation, your faith hasn't failed. Yeah, I know I've done that.

God still loves me. Then your faith hasn't failed. But if you stop saying that, stop believing that God can still do something wonderful with your life, then your faith has failed.

So, it's very important for us to see in this passage, what is the thing in us which we must never lose? And that's our faith. Jesus spoke so much about that. We know that in many situations, he encouraged them to have faith to do miracles and faith to cast out demons and all.

But here he was speaking about faith when we have failed so utterly and totally. And if our faith doesn't fail, and I want to say to all of you here, I mean, even if you don't need this word today, maybe someday in the future, something terrible can happen. You can have a terrible failure in your life where you let down the Lord so badly and weep bitterly, just like Peter wept bitterly.

And I want to say to you at that time, if you can still say that God still loves me, he's the lifter of my head, you can still one day turn around and be one who strengthens your brothers. That's God's way. So then we go to this point of why did God permit this failure? Why does God allow failure? I believe it is so that we, first of all, I think there are two reasons.

One is so that we never take credit for victory when God gives it to us. Or for some blessing in our ministry, when God blesses our ministry, that we don't take credit to ourselves. We don't take glory to ourselves.

See, God's blessing is something that can, it's so wonderful that we can become proud so easily when God blesses us in a way that he uses us in a way that he hasn't used others. And, you know, the tendency to unconsciously compare ourselves or our ministry with the ministry of other people. There's a lot of that that goes on in our minds, which, though we act humble on the outside and all that, which where we can secretly begin to think, well, you know, God's blessed me, and blessed me more, and blessed my ministry

more.

Or we can be proud of victory over sin. Sin is like a pit. Every sin is like a pit, but if anger is a ten-foot pit, if God were to give me victory to pull me out of anger so that I never get angry again, I've got total victory over my foul temper.

And then I've come out of this ten-foot pit and I've fallen to a hundred-foot pit called spiritual pride. That's not really victory. That's what often happens.

Somebody gets victory over one sin, and then he gets so proud of that, that he doesn't realize he's fallen into the deepest of all pits, which is spiritual pride. Now, how can God save us from that? Or God blesses our ministry in such a wonderful way that we see results, souls are saved, or churches are established, and whatever we do prospers. It's very easy for God to do that through anyone.

But for God to keep a man humble at the end of such blessing, that's very difficult. Christian history is littered with the examples of people who have been tremendously blessed and who got puffed up and destroyed themselves with spiritual pride because they were proud of God's blessings. So, one way, one major way in which God saves us from that pride is by repeated failure to such an extent that we never forget what total failures we were.

I believe on the day of Pentecost, there's such a tremendous blessing that Peter experienced in his ministry. I mean, imagine, put yourself, sometimes when we read the scriptures, it's good to put ourselves in the place of the person whom you're reading about and see how would I react if I were in that situation. That's a very good way to read the scriptures.

In any situation, in the Old Testament or New Testament, put yourself there in the place of that person. So, here I put myself in the place, or you put yourself in the place of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and you preach. How long was the sermon? Maybe 15 minutes.

And you preach 15 minutes, and boy, 3,000 people are saved. Not just 3,000 ordinary people, but 3,000 hardcore Jews. Think if you went to Israel and preached, and in one meeting after 15 minutes, 3,000 people among your listeners got converted and took baptism and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

I think you'd have some difficulty handling that. And all the apostles would have had a difficulty handling that, except Peter. He was the only one who was capable of handling that type of blessing.

Because if you went up to Peter and slapped him on the back and said, Boy, Peter, see what happened. How God's blessed your mercy. What a man of God you are.

He'd have said, Listen, I know what I did six weeks ago. He couldn't forget what he was, a total failure. He denied the Lord, let down the Lord so badly, that the memory of that remained with him all through his life.

And that was his salvation, that God could use him to open the door to the Jews, to open the door to the Gentiles, to limitless avenues of ministry. Because he had learned a lesson through failure. Now that's not a man's way.

You know, if you're a repeated failure in college, they write you off. Say, you're no use, go and do something else. But God's ways are different.

As different as the heaven is from the earth. And so there is a purpose in all the failures he takes us through. So one is, so that we don't get puffed up with pride.

The other reason for failure is, so that we never again look down our noses on other people who fail. You know, that's another tendency. One is this tendency to get puffed up when God blesses me in some wonderful way, or uses me in some wonderful way in which he hasn't used other people.

And the other is that we tend to look down on someone who perhaps hasn't got the victory that I have. And we don't realize how, just like spiritual pride, because of God using me, stinks before God. In the same way, when I look down on another person, that also stinks before God.

The Bible says, Proverbs, don't even rejoice when your enemy falls. Don't let your heart be glad, it says. So God doesn't, you know, want us to rejoice even when our enemy falls.

We are fallen creatures, and I remember reading years ago, a small little article by Francis Schaeffer, who said that, I mean, I can't express it as well as he does in that little article, but whenever I see anything wrong in another human being, in an area in which I'm right and he's wrong, it tends to exalt me above that person in my mind. And that removes the relationship that God expects me to have as a creature, to a fellow creature. And I can never be to him what God wants me to be.

And that feeling of I'm superior comes because I've not failed enough in my life. I haven't got that education that comes through failure sufficiently. If I had it, if God had rubbed my nose in my own muck for so long that I never lost the smell of it, then I would never look down on that person who has failed.

But maybe my nose has not been rubbed in my own muck for so long enough. Maybe I need to fail another 10,000 times before I learn that lesson. So how long does it take to learn? Well, it differs with different people.

Some people learn quickly that without Christ I can do nothing. That's the basic lesson. You know, I believe that Jesus was trying to teach his disciples that lesson which he said in John 15 verse 5, Apart from me, you can do nothing.

Now, theoretically, we all know that. Now, who among us would say, Apart from Christ, I can do something? No one. We have the right answers.

But deep down in our subconscious being, we're not convinced that apart from Christ I can do nothing. Jesus used the example of the branch in the tree, that even if that branch has been producing fruit for 50 years, 50 years, you cut it off today. That's the end.

No more fruit. It's that, you know, sense of helplessness and weakness. I can do nothing apart from Christ.

In order to teach us that lesson, he has to allow us to go through repeated failure. And that's why Peter, towards the end of his life, he writes in 2 Peter chapter 1, 2 Peter 1, he says, he's talking about a number of qualities that make us fruitful, in verse 8, 5 to 8. And then he says in verse 9, If you lack these qualities, you're blind and short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. How does a person become blind and short-sighted? When he forgets the pit he was pulled out from.

And I can imagine when Peter wrote that, he was thinking of his own having denied the Lord, his purification from his former sins. He's forgotten it. And when I forget what a wretch I was, and what all

failures I've had, and where I still fail in my life, I can become very unmerciful to other people.

And then I become blind and short-sighted. So, these are the reasons why God has to allow failure in our life, to keep us in that place of humility, and where we don't look down upon other people. The second area I want to speak about, in relation to God's ways, is the area of weakness.

We would think that a man of God, must be a man who is always strong. And that's the, you know, in the world, just like they don't have value for people who are failures, they don't have value for people who are weak. The world is looking for strong people.

Corporations and everywhere, they want strong capable people. But have you understood from the New Testament, God looks for weak people. In 2nd Corinthians, Paul says, in verse chapter 13, verse 4, speaking about Jesus, it says, He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God.

We also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed towards you. So, God's way, secondly, is to make us weak, just like He allows us to fail. He has to make us weak, not strong.

It's through weakness, that He manifests His power. And Paul says, even Jesus, was crucified because of weakness. It is a weakness He deliberately chose.

That means, He said to His disciples, if I wanted, I could call 72,000 angels right now to come and fight for me, but I'm not going to do that. He deliberately chose weakness, allowed Himself to be bound, beaten. He was crucified because of weakness.

He could have come down from the cross easily. That way of weakness is so little known among Christians today. That's because, generally speaking, Christendom has not understood the way of the cross.

If there's one message that's missing in preaching to the unbeliever today, it's the message of repentance. And if there's one message that's missing in preaching to believers today, it's the message of the cross in the life of the believer. You have to take up your cross and follow Me, otherwise you cannot be My disciple.

It's a message that's rarely heard from the pulpit, whether it's charismatic or anti-charismatic circles. One thing that's common about both of them is that they both don't preach the cross, generally speaking. The cross is a symbol of weakness.

He was crucified because of weakness. And we cannot understand the power of God if we have not understood that weakness that God wants to bring us to through the cross. Even the great Apostle Paul in the previous chapter, he says in chapter 12, verse 7, Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations that I had, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, to keep me from exalting myself.

It was a messenger of Satan. What are you supposed to do with a messenger of Satan that keeps on harassing you? Well, the standard answer would be resist it in Jesus' name. Get rid of it.

You're not supposed to have a messenger of Satan in your life. I don't know what that messenger of Satan was. I personally think it was a sickness that Paul had which he never seemed to get rid of.

He who had healed the sick and even raised the dead had some type of ailment in his body which he never seemed to be free from. And God could have healed him. God used him to heal.

Even the handkerchiefs from his body healed the sick. But in his own case, it was necessary to keep him weak because otherwise God's power would not be manifested in him. And he prayed.

In fact, he prayed like we should pray when we are sick. Anybody who is sick should only pray one prayer. Lord, heal me.

And that's what Paul prayed too. Lord, heal me. He says, I entreated the Lord, verse 8. I kept on asking the Lord until I got an answer.

The point is not three times. The point is until I got an answer. He got an answer in three times.

But if he hadn't got an answer in three times, he would have prayed 30 times or 300 times. But he prayed until he got an answer and the Lord said to him, No, I'm not going to heal you. My grace is sufficient for you.

And the Living Bible says, another part of that verse, verse 9. My power shows up best in weak people. My power shows up best in weak people. You know like a light shines more brightly when it is dark.

You see it more brightly anyway. God's power is manifest in a much greater way in human weakness. Where it is obvious that this is God doing the work.

This is not this man. I mean no man could possibly do something like that. This man is an incapable, weak type of person.

But this is God. So many servants of God today, you look at them, you watch them minister and you get the feeling this is a mighty capable man and I'm not like that. You don't get the impression of a weak, helpless type of person who is terribly dependent upon God for help.

That's not the image unfortunately even of a lot of Christian preachers. It's not the image they want you to have. They want you to have the image of a mighty man of faith who never has any doubts or fears in his life.

And that shows to me the man's own insecurity. You know the more insecure we are in our relationship with God, please listen to this carefully, the more insecure we are in our relationship with God, the more we want to impress other people that we are mighty men of God or mighty women of God. And the converse is also true.

The more secure we are in our relationship with God, God loves me. I don't have to prove anything about myself to anyone. I'm just a disciple whom Jesus loves.

I don't have to prove to you that I'm a great man of faith or anything like that. And Paul was secure in the love of God for him. And so he says, Therefore, I'm content, verse 10, with weaknesses.

Imagine to be perfectly content when God has told you, I'm not going to remove that sickness. It's going to be with you. OK, Lord.

Praise the Lord. That's fine. Because it's serving a purpose.

Weakness. God's looking for weak people. Because He says in the last part of verse 10, When I'm weak, then I'm strong.

That is really God's way. He has to make us weak. I see that in the way God worked with Joe.

You know there's a verse in James which says that He uses the expression the end of the Lord. In the King James Version, James 5.11, it says the end of the Lord in his dealings with Job. Or the outcome.

You see the outcome of the Lord's dealings with Job. James 5.11. What was the end of the Lord? What was the end towards which God was working with Job? Job had such wonderful qualities. You just got to read chapters 29 to 31 of Job to see what a man he was.

He helped the widows. He helped the poor. He never made gold his God.

Even though he was a grandfather, he was careful with his eyes, not to lust with his eyes. He knew about lusting with his eyes thousands of years before Matthew 5 was spoken. He knew what a man he was.

But there was one thing missing in that man. With all his good qualities, he was a man who feared God, who turned away from evil. A man whom God himself could point out to Satan, saying there's no one like him in the whole earth.

The most wonderful man of God in the whole earth had one fundamental flaw in his character. Something so seriously wrong that God had to teach him a lesson through a very, very hard process. And I want to show you that end of the Lord which James 5 speaks about.

Have you ever thought about what you read in James 5? What was the end of the Lord? And I believe it was this. What we read in the book of Job in chapter 40. You know, when after all these preachers have finished speaking to him and they haven't accomplished what God wants to accomplish in Job, then God Himself speaks from chapter 38.

You see, the difference between God's preaching and man's preaching and God's preaching was this. Men were trying to convict Job of his sin like a lot of preachers trying to point out our sin to us. And God, in an amazing way, in those two chapters, in chapter 38 and 39, He doesn't say one word about sin.

Have you noticed that? You compare that with the four preachers who went before that and all they were doing was preaching about Job's sin. And God never said a word about it. God just showed him His greatness.

And I believe that's what we need to see. And Job says when he sees God's greatness in Job 40, verse 4, Behold, I am nothing. I am insignificant.

Lord, I have nothing to say. That's the place to which God wants to bring us. God has to reduce us to zero before He can use us.

And I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, if God is in the process of reducing you to zero through your circumstances, through your neighbors, through your relatives, through financial struggles, through physical sickness perhaps, whatever it is, let Him do His work. Because when you come to that place, He can accomplish something wonderful. When I am weak, then I am strong.

Behold, I am nothing. You know, the most wonderful book I've ever read on humility is Andrew Murray's book. I've never read anything equivalent.

And he says there how a lot of us think that humility is dependent on sinning. In the sinner, humility comes out of two reasons. One, because we're sinners.

We've failed so much. What else can we do but humble ourselves? But in the most humble man that ever walked on the earth, there was no sin. Jesus.

Where did His humility come from? His humility didn't come because He had failed so much. And that's so true, you know. When we look at our life, so often our humility comes out of the fact that we have failed so much.

We have failed so much. We have failed so much, oh Lord. Well, how can I lift up my head? Yeah, that's true.

That's a great aid to humility, our failure, as we just considered earlier. But we must remember that in Jesus, the humblest man who walked on the earth, there was no failure at all. And yet, He was the humblest man that ever walked on the earth.

And Andrew Murray expresses it so beautifully in that book. He says, Jesus had that sense of entire nothingness so that the Father might be everything in His life. I really love that.

That is true Christianity. To be nothing so that Jesus can be everything in our life. So that people who come in contact with you don't think you are the great man of faith or a great woman of faith or some mighty man.

No. Just an ordinary person. But someone through whom the beauty of Jesus radiates in your words and in your conduct and your behavior.

And very often unconsciously. It's not a deliberate attempt to act like Jesus. In fact, we can get sick and tired of people who try to act like Jesus towards us.

But it's an unconscious thing. It comes out of that sense of entire nothingness. It's in our thoughts.

Humility is in our thoughts. It's the sense of utter weakness and nothingness that God might be everything. That's what God created us to be.

He created us to reflect His glory, to radiate His glory. You know, there is one thing about God that He'll never give to us. He'll give us His nature, but He'll never give us His glory.

It says in Isaiah 42.8, I think it is, My glory will I not give to another. And you know, if you were to examine your life, as I examine my life, I believe one of the greatest sins that we have all committed is the times when we have touched the glory of God. When we have taken credit for things we had no right to take credit for.

It was God, but we accepted the credit for it. We pretended we did it. And we thought in our minds that we'd done something.

I know I feel terribly in this area. It's one of my major areas of repentance constantly. Lord, I never want to touch Your glory.

It's brought so much weeping in my life. If you see how serious a sin it is, it will bring a lot of weeping in your life too. True Christianity is to have that sense of entire nothingness, that God might be everything.

That's humility. That's why God has to reduce us to weakness. So don't look at all these great so-called mighty men of God on the television screen and on the platforms and wish you were like them.

I don't want to be like them, to tell you honestly. I don't envy them at all. I'm secure in my relationship with God.

I don't have to be like you. I don't have to be like another person. I thank God I'm myself.

You know that you have a particular purpose in God's plan. There's a particular slot that you have in the body of Christ. And you're going to frustrate God's purpose for your life if you're always wishing that you could be like somebody else, wishing you could preach like somebody else or be like somebody else or do things like that man can do it.

You're just frustrating God's plan for you. Imagine if the kidney in the body, say, I'm hidden away in the body. Nobody appreciates me and I wish I could be like the tongue.

And it's never going to be the tongue and it won't do its job as a kidney properly and do a lot of havoc in the body. You think the kidney is not important just because it's hidden and unseen? To be secure that God's made me the way I'm supposed to be. And the more hidden I am, the safer I am in a sense.

In fact, the more public our ministry and the more visible our ministry doesn't make you any more important in God's eyes, but it makes you a bigger target for Satan. And particularly if you try to have a ministry that God never called you for, then you're an even greater target of Satan. Our competition, oh boy! The thing that saved me from competition, I'll tell you honestly, there's a lot of competition in Christian circles that I can honestly say before God that I am not jealous of any ministry, of any Christian worker in the world.

And I'm not in competition with a single soul because of one reason, not because I'm such a great humble saint, but because God has shown me my place in the body of Christ. And that He has shown me that He never made a mistake in the temperament He gave me. He never made me like somebody else because He had a particular function for me to fulfill.

I don't want to be like somebody else. I don't want to have somebody else's temperament. I don't want to have somebody else's ministry.

I'd be frustrating. My father's wonderful plan for my life. And when I came to rest in that, I could glory in my weakness.

Okay, I'm not like that person. So what? God made me like this because I have a particular function to fulfill that can never be fulfilled if I'm not like this. So we need to glory in our weakness.

And the third thing I want to speak about is perplexity. I spoke about failure, weakness, perplexity. Again, God's ways are not our ways.

In the world, people don't have time for a man who is perplexed and confused. Is there a place for perplexity in the life of a wholehearted spiritual Christian where you say, Lord, I'm confused. I don't know what your will is.

Of course, the way to test it is, was there perplexity in the life of Jesus? Was He ever unsure about God's will? What do you think? What about after He had lived on earth for 33 and a half years? On the last day of His earthly life, He wasn't sure about God's will. Do you know that? That's what He was struggling with in Gethsemane. He was saying, Father, isn't there another way? I can't imagine Jesus praying that even for one second if He was absolutely sure of the Father's will.

I mean, I wouldn't pray. If I were sure of the Father's will, I wouldn't try to change the Father's will. And Jesus is some millions of miles ahead of me.

Can you imagine Him trying to change His Father's will? No. He was perplexed. Perplexity is not an indication of carnality.

It does not mean that you're not mature or not spiritual. I believe because we are human, there are many areas where we will not know God's will perfectly. And there's no harm in acknowledging that.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 8, he speaks about this earthen vessel in verse 7 that carries this glory of God mentioned in verse 6. He says, this wonderful glory of God is seen in an earthen vessel. You know, sometimes we want to project an image of a golden vessel. No.

It's an earthen vessel. So easily cracked. You know, in the villages of India, they use earthen vessels all the time.

You've got to be very careful. Even when you put an earthen vessel on the ground, it can break so easily. It's just made of earth, the clay from the potter's wheel.

You put it down a little hard and it's broken. That's how weak we are. Just a little bit of blessing and we get puffed up.

You prayed for somebody and the fellow got healed. Boy, the vessel is already broken. That's how weak we are.

Pride has broken the vessel. Some blessing came in our life unexpectedly and that's it. We are earthen vessels.

But in this earthen vessel, the thing that people need to see is not, oh, what a wonderful vessel with the glory of God in the earthen vessel. And because we are earthen vessels, it says here in verse 8, middle of verse 8, we are perplexed. And we will be perplexed.

But we don't despair. Okay. I don't know.

I remember reading an article of Tozer's years ago where he said, the most profound statement in the whole Bible. What is the most profound statement in the whole Bible? Tozer's opinion was, Ezekiel 37 verse 3, O Lord God, You know. That is the most profound statement in the whole Bible.

Lord, You know. There is no harm in saying in so many situations in life, I don't know. God knows.

There are things I don't understand. That is the answer I have to give to many questions that people ask me in India. Why has God allowed all this poverty here? Why all these lepers who go begging, begging, begging, begging every week.

They don't have salvation. They are not saved. They don't know the Lord.

And they have it pretty bad on earth as well. Where is your God, they say? Look at this poor fellow's life. He was born into that type of life in a slum.

He has nothing on earth and nothing in eternity. Lord, You know. I don't know.

I mean, if I were God, I probably wouldn't allow any poverty on earth. That is because I am stupid. I am not God.

I don't know. God in His tremendous wisdom allows a lot of things which I would not allow. I don't know.

These founders of false religions that have created so much havoc for the true Christian faith that have persecuted Christians in different lands. You know, think of some major religions in the world that were founded by somebody hundreds of years ago. I have often thought if I were God, I would have just killed off that little baby because I knew that He was going to found a false religion.

I knew that havoc it was going to create to my children years in the future. But God didn't do it. Why? I don't know.

Why do the wicked prosper? Why is it some people who are so faithful, so righteous, so wholehearted seem to struggle, struggle, struggle all through life? And why do other believers seem to have it so easy? Lord, You know. I don't know. I don't know the answer to many, many things.

I do know some absolutes such as God makes everything work together for good to those who love Him. That I am sure of. God is on the throne.

He is running the universe. He knows everything that is happening to us. The devil has been defeated.

And it will go well with the righteous. You know, God told the prophet to tell the righteous, say to the righteous, it will go well with you. That's for certain.

But why so many things happen? Why He allows many things to happen? I don't know. And there is no harm, even if you are the most mature saint on earth, to say there are certain areas. I don't know God's will.

I am in a fog. I am trying to walk with God. But that's part of the walk of faith, you know.

Certainty can sometimes be the equivalent of sight. And a certain amount of perplexity is necessary for a walk of faith. So, in perplexity, if I can still trust God, and say, well, I don't know, but I trust my Father.

It may be something that is happening in your life. Say, I don't know why He has allowed it. I don't know why He hasn't relieved me of this burden yet.

I mean, I've searched my heart, and everything seems to be right, and I don't know. But I know my Father loves me still. You haven't lost your faith.

That's true Christianity. It's not the way Christianity is projected today in a lot of pulpits. But that is true Christianity.

Perplexity, Jesus had it. Weakness, Jesus had it. Lastly, opposition.

Persecution. It says in 2 Timothy 3.12, All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. There is no way out of that.

That's another thing which the world can't understand. If you are God's Almighty, why doesn't He protect you from all these evil people? I mean, when the world's super power sends its military to distant parts of the world, it does so many things to rescue its prisoners of war, and so many risks it takes, and so much money it's willing to spend to protect its forces. Why doesn't the universe's super power do that for His children? Isn't that a good question? God says, My ways are not your ways.

Your ways are as different from My ways as the heaven is above the earth. God is glorified when His children go through persecution and are faithful. And that's part of one of the differences in the New Covenant from the Old Covenant.

In the Old Covenant, God shut the lion's mouth when Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. But in the amphitheatres of Rome 19 centuries ago, no lion's mouth was shut when the Christians were thrown to the lions. Because these were New Covenant saints who were following the Lamb wherever He goes.

And their forerunner had gone ahead of them. And His prayer when He faced the cross was, you read in John 12, Father, what shall I pray? Save me from this hour? No. Father, glorify Your name.

Have you read that beautiful prayer? Wonderful prayer for us to pray when we can't understand things. When we go through difficulty, trial and probably facing death. John's Gospel chapter 12.

Jesus was honest enough to say that His soul was troubled. John 12, verse 27. Now my soul has become troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No.

I shall pray, Father, glorify Thy name. And in a situation where you face one day, what are you going to pray? I know our human tendency, yours and mine, is to say, Father, save me from this. Let's follow Jesus and say, Father, glorify Thy name.

It says in Hebrews that people by faith quenched the violence of fire. In the Old Testament. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fire and came out untouched.

Polycarp, the elder in Smyrna, was thrown into the fire and he was burnt. Many other Christians like that. We don't see God doing it.

That's the same God. The God whom the Christians who were burnt in the fire worshipped was the same God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But now, we are to glorify God in the fires.

God's ways are not our ways. In poverty, in weakness, through failure, through perplexity, through opposition, where there is no relief from the persecution until death comes. Christians locked up in prisons for 15, 20, 30 years.

God can release them. He did it even in New Covenant times. He released Peter.

I've often thought about that incident where Peter comes out of prison. It says the previous couple of days earlier, James had already been killed, beheaded. And then a few days later, Peter is released.

The angel comes and releases him and he comes out and he comes to this prayer meeting in the house of Mary. And he gives this wonderful testimony how God did a mighty miracle and sent the angel to remove the chains from his legs and the doors opened one after the other and brothers and sisters, here I am! And sitting there listening to him is James' wife or his mother if he wasn't married. Wondering, why didn't God do that for my husband? Why did he allow my husband to be beheaded three days ago? Why didn't the angel come then? Lord, you know, his ways are perfect.

And if in every situation we can bow our head and say, God, I don't have the answer to everything on this earth. But I know one thing, my father loves me. I'm a child of God.

And even if I can't explain a thousand and one things, my father loves me. My faith hasn't failed. I'm a victor.

I'm more than conqueror through him who loved me and will never let me go. Let's pray. If there's someone here who's facing the situations we spoke about right now.

Word of God says, cast your burden upon the Lord. Roll it upon him. Don't lift it anymore.

Once and for all, roll it upon him. Humble yourself and acknowledge that you will never have the answer to everything. Acknowledge that you're a mere created human being, a speck of dust on another speck of dust called planet earth that's rotating in this universe run by our Heavenly Father.

There are many things we don't understand. But we know one thing. Our Father loves us.

And that's our glory as we go away this evening and every day of our life. I am beloved by my Heavenly Father. I failed, but he's forgiven me.

And he still loves me and he'll still do something wonderful with my life. Therefore, I refuse to be discouraged. I will only praise him till the end of my days.

Heavenly Father, help us, encourage us, strengthen us to be all that you want us to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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